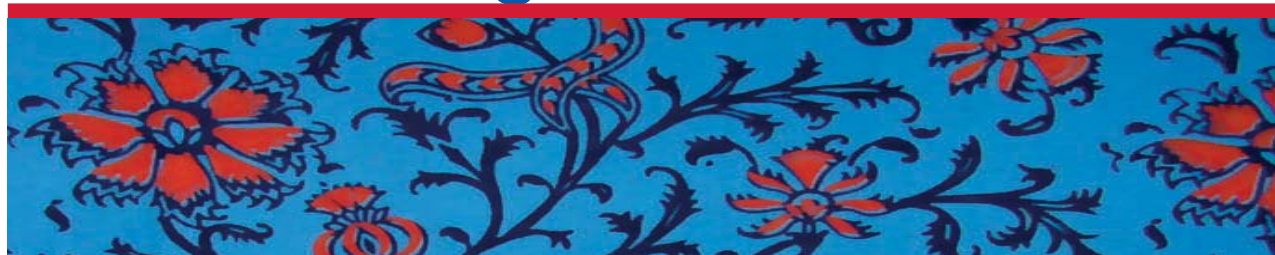




# Connect-Bangladesh Newsletter



Issue #11 February 15, 2006

One more issue and we'll have a full year of newsletters! It has been an exciting year: twenty new internet learning centers (ILCs). Over the next few months, we will begin announcing our plans for the next year, including new centers throughout the country in collaboration with a number of local partner organizations. In this issue, we get caught up on a few contests, talk about our local and global educational modules, and dedicate several pages to a discussion of how the internet can be used to complement youth activism and community involvement.



## contents

The next issue of the newsletter will look significantly different, as we are incorporating a number of new features into the next layout. If you have any suggestions regarding layout or new features, please let us know. Also: we're trying to come up with a better name for the newsletter. If you have any suggestions, please send to:

RI-SOL, Bangladesh Office  
Media Coordinator  
House 210, Road 2 East  
DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka-1206

For the electronically inclined:  
[infobd@ri.org](mailto:infobd@ri.org)

Teacher Training  
Adolescent Health  
Cultural Smorgasbord  
**Page 2**

Fibonacci versus POTUS  
**Page 3**

The IEW Quiz  
**Page 4**

The Human Virus  
**Page 5**

ICT for Activism Q&A  
**page 6-11**

Penfriends  
**Page 12**

Connectivity Focus: Eather Newaz  
**Page 13**

## Teacher Training

For the last few months, we have been constructing Internet Learning Centers (ILCs) in Chittagong and training teachers and administrators in their use. Over the last month, an additional 101 teachers have been training in basic computer skills, including 19 teachers from the Agrabad Girls High School, 11 from the Nimtala High School, 23 from the Agrabad Government Colony School, 10 from the Maizpara Mahamudunnabi Chowdhury High School and 38 from the Chittagong Steel Mills High School.



In March, we will begin the second phase of teacher training, the Teacher Professional Development Workshops. These intensive week-long workshops will be offered to three to five teachers from each core school and their partner schools. With fifteen new centers in Chittagong, we expect to run one or two sessions per month for the next year. During TPD training, teachers are introduced to the teaching methodologies at the heart of the Global Connections and Exchange Program: participatory learning that stimulates creativity and analytic thinking.

## Adolescent Health Project

Beginning in January, students are participating in an ongoing series of activities related to adolescent health. These lessons and projects cover topics such as personal hygiene, nutrition, depression, and relating to parents and peers. Schools near Dhaka participated in January; these schools included the Rani Bilashmoni Government High School, the Safi Uddin Sarker Academy and College

and the Siraj Uddin Sarker Vidyanekeon. In February, the program expanded to Comilla and Jessore, and in March schools in Chittagong will begin the project. The project is coordinated by RI-SOL Education Assistant Eather Newaz.



*Students from classes IX and X involved in the ILC Adolescent Health Project.*

## Cultural Smörgåsbord

Over a one and a half month course, we developed a unique project between English classes in Sweden and Bangladesh. This project began as a dialogue with Linda Mårtensson, a teacher at the Hjalmar Strömerskolan in Strömsund, Sweden. Two of her classes, a total of 22 students between 16 and 18 years of age, developed a joint project on the theme of Children and Leisure time. Both sets of students described their own societies in terms of what people do in their "down time". The project included a series of email and forum based correspondences.



*One of two classes in Sweden who participated in the Children and Leisure Project with students in Bangladesh.*

## Fibonacci versus the Presidents of the United States of America

Presidents' Day in the US falls on the third Monday of February, so we're announcing the winners of this contest just in time! For this contest, we asked a question that may have required a little web searching to answer. This month's contest was to list the US presidents in the order of the Fibonacci sequence. We received eight submissions, and the winners were Team Kayrakkum from Tajikistan. Congratulations! We particularly appreciated their explanation.



The Fibonacci sequence is a famous numerical sequence that starts with one, adds the preceding number and repeats the process with the resulting sum.

If you consider Washington to be the first president, Adams second, Jefferson third, etc., you can write out their succession in terms of the Fibonacci sequence. The presidents are listed in order on the White House website and wikipedia Here's how Team Kayrakkum explained their answer, which was mostly correct:

Hello, we are the students from Tajikistani ILC, from Kayrakkum town, have colculated the Fibonacci's sequence and listed the America presidents.

```
1+1=2
2+3=5
3+5=8
5+8=13
8+13=21
13+21=34
1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34.
```

According to the Fibonacci sequence the list of the American presidents will be:

1. George Washington
2. John Adams
3. Thomas Jefferson
5. James Monroe
8. Martin Van Buren

13. Millard Fillmore
21. Chester Alan Arthur
34. Dwight David Eisenhower

This is the answer that we expected, but it isn't 100% correct for two reasons. The first is mathematical: technically, the Fibonacci sequence begins 1,1,2,3,5,8..., so the answer should read:

1. George Washington
1. George Washington
2. John Adams
3. Thomas Jefferson
5. James Monroe
8. Martin Van Buren
13. Millard Fillmore
21. Chester Alan Arthur
34. Dwight David Eisenhower

The other issue is even more abstruse -- Dwight Eisenhower wasn't the 34th person to be President of the US, even though he is listed as President number 34. You can blame that on Grover Cleveland who was the 22nd President, lost the next election, and was then elected President again. The way the Americans have numbered their presidents, he is both #22 and #24. By this reasoning, John F. Kennedy would be the thirty-fourth person to hold the office.



*Above: Presidents Kennedy and Eisenhower debate who was #34.*

The contest still goes to Team Kayrakkum, however, because they listed Chester Arthur's middle name. Good attention to detail.



Every November, students and teachers throughout the world celebrate International Education Week. We challenged students in Bangladesh to use internet resources in answering a series of questions posted on our website. After scanning the official IEW website at [www.iew.gov](http://www.iew.gov), students filled out the online quiz.

Four groups achieved a perfect score; the first one to respond was from the Yusuf School in Comilla, Bangladesh. Their team members included Palash Khan, Golam Saruar, and Raihan Ahmed, all in Class 8.

We have reproduced the quiz below, so you can test yourself:

1. In which year International Education Week (IEW) was first held?  
(a) 1993 (b) 1997 (c) 2000 (d) 2001
2. Which government sponsored International Education Week 2005?  
(a) America (b) Bangladeshi (c) Jordanian (d) Afghanistani.
3. How many countries celebrate this IWE today worldwide?  
(a) 200 (b) more than 200 (c) 56 (d) more than 100
4. What is the aim to celebrate this event?  
(a) to prepare Americans for a global environment  
(b) to attract future leaders from abroad to study in America  
(c) 'a' and 'b' both  
(d) to encourage aquatic sports competition
5. How many international students study in America in 2002-2003?  
(a) less than 570,000 (b) 570,000 (c) more than 570,000 (d) 440,000
6. What percentage of American college students believe that international education will give them a competitive advantage in the workplace?  
(a) 70% (b) 60% (c) 40% (d) 88%
7. What percentage of American college students believe that having international students on campus enriches their own learning experiences?  
(a) 60% (b) 90% (c) 80% (d) 70%
8. How many American students study abroad each year?  
(a) 400,000 (b) 200,000 (c) 160,000 (d) 700,000
9. Who said, "The focus which I found [as an international student] has never failed me...Perhaps it was that experience that set me on the road to where I am now"?  
(a) President Bush (b) Toni Blaire (c) Mother Teresa (d) Kofi Annan
10. Who said, "When students get to know each other, they learn the universality of many values. That's going to be important for peace in the world"?  
(a) President Bush (b) Toni Blaire (c) Mother Teresa (d) Kofi Annan
11. How many questions should you answer in National Geographic Global IQ Quiz ?  
(a) 20 (b) 12 (c) 13 (d) 14
12. Who describes reading as the "New Civil Right"?  
(a) President Bush (b) Toni Blaire (c) Mother Teresa (d) Kofi Annan

13. What is the WebAddress (URL) of EducationUSA which promotes U.S. higher education abroad, supports overseas advising centers, and collaborates with U.S. educational organizations to strengthen international exchange?

- (a) <http://educationusa.state.gov> (b) <http://educationusa.state.com>  
(c) <http://educationusa.state.org> (d) <http://educationusa.state.net>

### End of Test!

## The Human Virus

Whether you are talking about Chickens or Computers, viruses usually are getting a bad rap in the news lately. In the interest of balanced journalism, we are pleased to bring to your attention a good story about a virus.

This virus's real name is Sagar . He is the top-ranked student of class three at the Yusuf Technical School in Comilla, Bangladesh and he is a trend-setter. When the Global Connections and Exchange Program came to the school, the program was aimed at secondary school students, ages about thirteen to seventeen. However, the Yusuf School also has younger students who were very inquisitive about the new computer center.



Sagar's mother works at the school, and his family lives on campus. The Internet Learning Center is literally a stone's throw from his front door. Everyday, whenever he has a chance, he spends his free time at the ILC. As other students leave the center, he hovers nearby waiting for a chair to open up and swoops in to claim it. Before

school, he drops by the center, he eats lunch quickly to spend some free time on the computers, after school he's also likely to be found in front of one of the monitors until the ILCs closes. Since he seems to pop up every time a computer is turned on, he has become known in the ILC as "virus".

Sagar can turn the workstations on and off, launch any program in the center; he types quickly in Bangla and English, and the mouse is a mere blur. He's a pro at Word and Powerpoint, and often shows off his drawing skills for visitors. He takes requests, and can produce good looking pictures in MS paint in under a minute. In fact, he's become so proficient that he is now often seen helping other people run web searches, use their email or figure out various features of ILC software. Interestingly, before last year, he had never seen a computer; now, he can't imagine living without one. Someday, he hopes to become a software engineer or graphic artist – any profession where he can use a computer every day.

We hope that we are incubating many more computer viruses like Sagar, and that their interest in computers and information technology is infectious.



*Above, left: Sagar alias Virus at work in the ILC. Above, right: One of Sagar's digital masterpieces.*

## ICT and Youth Activism

Recently, Bangladesh Global Connections Project Director Nazrul Islam discussed the topic of ICT and Youth Activism in a live webchat hosted by the US State Department's Alumni website (Live Q&A Section, <https://alumni.state.gov>).

ICT4A (ICT for Activism) is the use of technology to communicate between individuals and groups involved in activism – that is, taking action to improve some aspect of society. ICT4A also makes use of available media to get the message out about these activities – to identify community needs, raise awareness about public issues, and disseminate useful information. As in the Global Connections and Exchange Program, ICT can provide a means of bridging different groups, leading to better intercultural understanding and cooperation. We have written a short guide to ICT4A and posted it on our website under the Student Resources section (<http://www.connect-bangladesh.org>).



During the Q&A session, Nazrul answered questions from students all over the world:

### **Alisher From Tajikistan:**

Hello!

### **Nazrul Islam:**

Hello. Greetings from Bangladesh. Thanks for joining us in the Q and A. The topic of the chat is important for the youth around the world as ICT is now impacting many aspects of their lives and opening a new window of opportunities. ICT has already been recognised as a powerful resource-- an innovative tool for empowerment. Youth should get involved in dialogue about how ICT could benefit them. On the other hand, if we think of utilising ICT for a better world we should relate it to the young people. UN estimates that over 510 million young women and 540 million young men live in the world today. Millennium Development

Goals (MDGs) have also put emphasis on using ICT for benefit of the marginalised people. Its young people are most marginalised and vulnerable in many societies. They can't afford to ignore ICT. I am looking forward to your questions.

### **Alal From Bangladesh:**

What do you mean by "youth empowerment through ICT?"

### **Nazrul Islam:**

Well, empowerment can be defined as a process of gaining control of the means and resources having direct bearing on one's livelihood. And ICT stands information and communication technologies. ICT is now being considered as powerful resources that youth can use to get new skills and get access to information. These skills and information can help youth to improve their life and livelihoods. This way youth can be empowered with the help of ICT.

### **Abel From Peru:**

Thanks to the so called "Internet Cabins" in Peru we have obtained a wide Internet penetration. (Note: The "Internet Cabins" were created through a program with the United Nations and Peru's government to build Internet access in underdeveloped and rural towns.)

It is interesting to notice that the main users of this "Cabins" are young people from shanty towns and poor districts.

Notwithstanding, I have not noticed a spread use of the Internet as a tool to make their voice to be heard or to increase their knowledge or their abilities. Internet, instead, is used for gaming and social activities. What do you think?

### **Rakib From Bangladesh:**

Many young people do not have access to ICT in developing countries like Bangladesh. How can the young generation get rid of the 'digital divide' in the developing nations?

### **Nazrul Islam:**

Well, internet can be used in many ways-- There are lots of uses of internet. Sometimes it can be a tool for entertainment. This is not always bad. But the important thing is to guide young people to use ICT to develop





**Mohammad From Bangladesh:**

How can illiterate persons improve themselves by using ICT?

**Nazrul Islam:**

Hi Mohammed and Biplab -- I'll try to address your two questions on illiteracy.

Mostly, ICT has been directed towards upper primary and secondary education, where people already can read. However, there are several efforts to use icon-based or voice-navigated lessons to teach literacy. One major issue: localisation -- the resources are mostly developed in English.

Telephony is one aspect of ICT, whether it's via a computer (e.g., VoIP) or a cell phone -- why not use it, if it works?

**Silviya From Bulgaria:**

Hello, Mr Islam! I am Silvia Petkina from Bulgaria. I am very glad that I have the opportunity to share my view with you and to ask you some questions. In my home country there is now a proposition that students have Internet Textbooks and study their lessons at home, in front of their computers. There would probably be tests and if you pass them, you would be allowed to continue with the next unit, school year and so on and so forth. Therefore there wouldn't be any need of teachers and schools. Do you support such a kind of acquiring education?

My second question is the following: Do you agree or disagree that computers and Internet create 'a single-

world culture?' It was a pleasure!

**Nazrul Islam:**

Hi Silviya --

You're lucky because home computers are not really an option in most of the world (despite hype about a laptop for every child -- that's a long way off for most regions of the world).

The idea is not bad though, in the sense that digital content is easily updated, and burning CDs is cheaper than printing books. However, I'd rather read paper than stare at a computer screen -- it's just more comfortable. Maybe we need better computer screens :-)

I think it would be mistake to let this concept of individual computer use replace the classroom, though, for social reasons. A virtual classroom is good, but it's nice to actually be around other people.

Regarding a single-world culture -- not a chance. The internet can serve as a common ground for discussion and can let people learn about other cultures, but so can the telephone or TV. People may have more things in common (for better or worse -- does everyone really need to know the latest slogan from McDonalds?), but the internet is not going to extinguish cultural diversity.

**Sagor From Bangladesh:**

My name is Sagor. I am 09 years old. I am a student of Yusuf School. I am called as Virus in the ILC of Yusuf School (Comilla-2) .Because I like to

*/\* USER COMMENTS \*/*

A.H.M Imran Khan | Class-10 | Chittagong Government Colony High School

*Even the oldest teachers in the school are no longer afraid of the computer, now they think it is a good idea and want to show off what they can do. I have been saying that these computers are necessary to the education of our generation, and now they agree. The only different thing is that teachers think to use the computers to do things like write something, but students use the computers to send messages and talk. For us, the computer is like a telephone that can call anywhere in the world.*

work in computer very much. I can work in Ms-word, Ms-powerpoint, Ms-paint etc. When I see any computer is free, then & then I sit there and start to work in computer. So that the OSM of the ILC given me this name -- VIRUS.

**Nazrul Islam:**

Hi Virus... believe it or not, everyone in our office has heard about you from our friends at Yusuf School. *[editor's note: See an article on Sagor, later in this newsletter...]* Usually, when we hear about a virus on our computers, it is very concerning -- but we would be glad to have more human viruses like you. Hopefully, you are very contagious and every kid in Comilla will come down with a case of internet-fever! ;-)

**ANJUMAN From Bangladesh:**

HOW CAN WE EARN MONEY BY USING Information and Communication Technology (ICT) OR ONLINE PROGRAM?

**Nazrul Islam:**

OK... now we're down to the \*real\* question\$...

The GCE Programme and many other projects that use community telecentres need to be sustainable for them to survive in the long term. In some places, schools or community centres can just pay for the internet service and hardware upkeep, but in many locations, internet access is very expensive (and scarce). To keep going, telecentres need to have some kind of income generating activity -- like providing community trainings, use of the facilities for communication (like email, net2phone, fax, etc), and use of the facilities for producing output like laser printed documents, photos, webpage development, etc. These services can be charged on a per-use or membership basis.

**Giyoeva From Tajikistan:**

Hello dear Nazrul Islam. We are members of the GCE Program at the Tajikistan Deaf School #8 in Dushanbe. We are glad that you are holding this event. We wanted to thank you and write our questions:

What do you think about our country Tajikistan?

What do your students know about us and would they like to be pen pals? Can you describe your center to our students? Are there any deaf students? Thanks a lot!

**Nazrul Islam:**

Zdravstvuite, Giyoeva -- my ochen' lyubim nasix druzei v Tazhikistane!

We're very familiar with Tajikistan having done many joint projects with schools through the Global Connections and Exchange Programme. In the past year, our schools in Bangladesh have done collaborative projects with schools throughout Tajikistan. Our students have learned about your culture, traditions, we've shared insights about the practice of Islam, and talked about the process of development in both countries.

We'd love to do a pen pal project -- please send a note to [infobd@ri.org](mailto:infobd@ri.org)!

Regarding our centres -- we're running school-based telecentres in 20 locations around the country. These centres range greatly in size -- from five workstations to twenty five, depending on the school. Each centre has internet access (again, depending where they are and what is available in that location, it may be microwave, DSL, dial-up or radio).

Right now, we are working with one centre for the visually disabled young people, but not yet with a school for the hearing impaired. I think in the next year we will solicit applications from additional schools serving students with several types of disabilities. Our goal is to attract a diverse set of students.

**Anwar From West Bank:**

Dear Mr. Nazrul Islam, With great pleasure I submit a question to you:

In your opinion how can ITC build a stronger society by improving the quality of education in developing countries?

**Nazrul Islam:**

In our programme, we are concentrating on teacher development. Teachers themselves need ICT skills in order to use them in their classrooms and to pass the skills to their students. In general, we use ICT as a tool. There's a

technology learning curve, but basic teaching skills are even more important. We use ICT to get those skills across to teachers - to show them how it can be used for participatory and project-based learning. Instead of replacing the existing curriculum, we try to stress how ICT can be used to augment their existing lessons.

**Golam From Bangladesh:**

Dear Nazrul Islam, I heard about a 100 USD (US Dollar) laptop. Do you think the 100 USD laptop and other cheap technologies will empower young people in poorer countries?

**Nazrul Islam:**

We are talking about bridging the digital divide. From that perspective, the \$100 laptop could be very promising --though many millions people around the world survive on \$1 per per day -- so it is still a lot of money for them. But this is also true that many people even in developing countries will be able to afford it (versus standard laptops). I think a major issue would be who gets these laptops, and when they get them, will they keep them or sell them?

Many people in even poor rural areas are buying cell phones. In Bangladesh nearly 40 million people have cell phones which cost same as this laptop. Probably these cell phones (which people already know how to use and find useful) will evolve over the next few years to incorporate many of the features of the \$100 desktop. Microsoft has put forward an alternate to the \$100 laptop which would be based on such cell phones. Probably other developers will also follow this path.

There are a lot of technical concerns about the \$100 laptop -- power considerations, networking issues, etc. It sounds like most of these issues have not been resolved. Right now, these computers would be fairly useless without software and net connectivity -- however, if they can reach the internet, they would be able to tap into a wealth of useful content. For example, wikipedia provides free access to a vast amount of knowledge on almost every subject. Sites like Project Gutenberg con-

tains tens of thousands of public domain text documents. There are many sites that cater directly to student needs, as well.

Whether it is the \$100 laptop, a cellphone, or some strange hybrid, I think students will be using some kind of device to supplement book learning over the next decade.

**Linda From United States:**

Does Relief International have plans to place more computers in schools in Bangladesh? Being able to use the Internet opens many doors in terms of gaining information that is not readily available in textbooks. From my observation, the schools with computers are able to get large numbers of students involved with technology in spite of the few number of computers that they have to work with. The Computer Techs in the schools are quite knowledgeable, but they could use more computers.

**Nazrul Islam:**

Hi Linda -- Definitely. We started with two schools in 2003, and we're now at 20 core schools. In addition, we encourage neighbouring schools to work out sharing agreements. We also work with schools that already have computer centres but want to take our teacher development training or be involved in our global collaborative projects. Effectively, we're reaching around 60,000 students right now. In the next year, we're expanding by at least another ten centres. After that, we'll leave the pilot phase and scale the program nationally.

We're not expanding for the sake of expanding, though. We're going where there is an interest and a need. Schools have to make a large commitment when they take on something as expensive as a telecentre. We'll only put computers into schools that can develop a realistic sustainability plan and continue the project on their own after a time.

**Du'Aa From Indonesia:**

1. What does teledensity mean? I've heard you talked about that before but I'm not sure I understand the meaning.

2. Technology for certain countries is not accessible; there are many people who can not even read. How do they understand technology and use it for their good, especially the youth? Do you think there is a positive correlation between education and technology?

**Nazrul Islam:**

Hi Du'Aa...

1. Teledensity: By this, I mean the number of telephones per person in a population. It is an indicator of technology infrastructure and reflects people's access to information.

2. There is definitely a positive correlation between education and technology -- technology can be an aid for both teaching and learning. With the aid of the internet, teachers and students can have access to a wide array of information and resources. For example, teacher may share lesson plans; students may use distance learning to explore subjects that are not taught locally.

**Mhamuda from Bangladesh :**

Which aspect of ICT is most beneficial for young society?

**Nazrul Islam:**

I think the most beneficial aspect of ICT for youth is to supplement their education. Youth are not limited so much by the quality of their school, the resources in the local community, or which teachers are available -- they can explore on their own. ICT skills are going to be crucial in the future, so there's a strong benefit for kids to learn these skills from an early age.

**S.M. From Bangladesh:**

How does the accessibility situation in compare with those in US, Europe and Asia?

**Nazrul Islam:**

I believe that Bangladesh is the most expensive country in the world for all modes of communication -- cell phone, internet, etc. This may change in the near future, though, as the infrastructure improves. Right now, every packet of internet-bound data goes through a satellite, but Bangladesh will soon be joined to the rest of the world through nice fat optical cable. If market forces are allowed to prevail, prices should plummet

in the next couple years. The other issue: getting the service to the individual user - the so-called "last mile".

Telephone infrastructure wasn't as advanced in Bangladesh as in the other countries, so there aren't phone poles and lines, and there are no buried cables. Whenever someone needs to connect to the internet, a new cable must be run. There's a positive side to this though: Bangladesh is moving quickly on wireless technologies, and many companies are competing to offer these services. However, it will be quite a while before the internet penetrates more rural areas.

I'm afraid that's all we have time for in this session. Thanks for joining us and submitting such excellent questions!

- Nazrul

## Pen Friends

Students in ILCs throughout the world have been participating in Pen Friends programs -- an ongoing activity that does not have to follow the monthly schedule of other lessons. Pen Friends is a less formal way for kids from Bangladesh, Tajikistan, the US and a host of other countries to get to know each other. Sometimes Pen Friends are individuals, sometimes, larger groups form. Here are some of the Pen Friends from Tajikistan.



*Penfriends in Tajikistan*

## Connectivity Team Focus: Eather Newaz

Eather Newaz is the Education Coordinator for the Global Connections and Exchange Program in Bangladesh. She works closely with other education staff members including Mohammad Nasirullah (Nasir), our education staff at each ILC and school teachers.



Before joining Relief International, Eather worked with a number of other NGOs on youth-related issues including Child Trafficking, Gender Issues, Conflict Management and Adolescent Health Topics including HIV, AIDS and STDs. In these positions, she was always involved in education as either a program leader or curriculum developer. She also has extensive experience as a staff trainer and instructor.

These skills have found expression in her position of Education Coordinator where she takes a direct hand in developing the monthly modules which are used on a regional and local level in Bangladesh. She also performs trainings for teachers and school administrators, including fundamental computer training and advanced teacher professional development training.

In addition to managing the formal academic component of our programs, Eather also plays a major role in coordinating after school activities and community education projects outside of regular school hours.

And please, don't forget to visit our website:

<http://www.connect-bangladesh.org/>

If you'd like to receive copies of this newsletter each month, send a letter to [infobd@ri.org](mailto:infobd@ri.org) and let us know.

The Global Connections and Exchange Project – Bangladesh is a project of Relief International - Schools Online's Global Citizenship & Youth Philanthropy Program and has been made possible with major funding from the United States State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Global Catalyst Foundation.